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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMCONGEN, LAGOS, NIGERIA

DESPATCH NO. 1

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

DATE April 1, 1955

REF

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SUBJECT: Bi-weekly Review -- March 16 through March 31

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POLITICAL

Budget Meetings of Legislatures (UNCLASSIFIED)

Passage of the Regional budgets has been effected by the Legislatures of the three Regions and the Southern Cameroons.

The Federal House, however, is still in session, having considered and passed scarcely more than one-half of the sections of the Federal Budget. It appears that the House may have to resort to all-night meetings if it is to achieve its scheduled adjournment date on April 7. Progress in considering the appropriations bill, each departmental estimate of which must be debated and voted upon separately by sub-item, has been retarded by the opposition's reluctance to forego any speaking time available under parliamentary regulations. None of the many amendments put forward by the opposition has yet been passed by the House. All departmental estimates so far considered have been approved in the form presented by the government.

In an extended debate over the bill to transfer direction of the Nigerian Railway System from government to a Corporation, extensive additions to the present system were proposed by Northern and opposition members. In rejecting such proposals the Government stated that the total cost of the proposed improvements would exceed the capital expenditure of the railway to date.

One opposition motion which received support from the other side of the House related to the expansion of Nigeria's defense forces. Speaking for the opposition, Jaja WACHUKU said that Nigeria could not be indifferent to the manifestly imperialistic ambitions of South Africa and that the country must bring its armed forces to a level commensurate with national safety.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

The standard of debate has been mediocre or worse. Most opposition motions and speeches have taken the form of crude

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implements designed to embarrass the NCNC (rather than the Government, which includes the NPC) and its ministers. At least one session was devoted to an exchange of insults ("thief", incompetent rascal") by the NCNC Federal Minister of Communications and Aviation, K.O.MBADIWE, and opposition leader AKINTOLA.

In the Eastern House the conflict between the Governor and his executive council (D-147,p.3, Mar. 18, 1955) was settled for the moment at least when the Speaker of the House, Ernest EGHUNA, ruled that theappropriation bill's controversial section, which deleted funds for the position of one Resident (a senior Administrative Officer) did not affect any public officer and consequently was not subject to the Governor's reserve powers. Following the Speaker's decision the House promptly passed the motion, the last item in the £7 million Regional appropriations bill, and thereupon adjourned sine die.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

It is not yet known whether the Governor will accept defeat on a measure which weakens the Region's administrative structure and which he has publicly declared illegal. Both Premier AZIKIWE and the Regional Ministers have promised that the controversy will not become a "crisis" and that, in any event, further consideration of the matter will be confined to the single section of the Bill which deals with the salaries of the 6 senior Residents.

Retirement of Governor General (UNCLASSIFIED)

There is still no official word as to Sir John MACPHERSON's successor. Immediately after the Governor General's departure on April 11, Sir Hugo MARSHALL, presently Chief Secretary of the Federation, will be sworn in as Acting Governor General.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

Since Sir Hugo is scheduled to retire in July of this year, it is important that Sir John's replacement arrive as soon as possible. In discussing his successor, Sir John has indicated that he personally agrees with Colonial Secretary LENNOX-BOYD that the Nigerian present political climate requires a political appointee rather than a career colonial servant.

Action Group spokesmen continue to make it clear that they have not yet forgiven Sir John for his part in the selection of the present Council of Ministers. At a large farewell dinner given Sir John by the Federal Ministers, the AG's Chief Akintola could find little laudatory to say other than to praise Sir John's "hearty laugh".

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Federal Chief Justice (UNCLASSIFIED)

The last remaining vacancy in the revised judicial setup has been filled with the appointment of Sir Stafford William Powell FOSTER-SUTTON, President of the West African Court of Appeal, as Chief Justice of the Federation of Nigeria.

Nigerianization (UNCLASSIFIED)

Nigerianization has probably been the most-debated issue in the budget sessions of the various legislatures. The comment and questions have been especially bitter in the Federal House where budget estimates for the expatriate ministries or departments invariably draw the familiar question: "Why so many non-African stenographers?" The stock reply of the responsible ex-officio minister is that Africans would be hired for the positions were they qualified and available.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

As Akintola and Wachuku have caustically pointed out in the House, the explanation for the large number of European clerical positions in the "sensitive" departments of the Federal Secretariat derives more from considerations of security than stenographic ability. Although the issue is a delicate one, it is doubtful that government policy as represented in the Council of Ministers, is anxious that the British release their present tight control over police and security files.

Cameroons Representation on UN Trustee Council (UNCLASSIFIED)

It has been announced that the Cameroons will be represented at the 1956 meeting of the UN Trusteeship Council by two native delegates chosen by the party in power at that time. One will speak for the Northern Cameroons, which is administered as part of Nigeria's Northern Region, while one will represent the independently-administered Southern Cameroons.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

Cameroonian political leaders have shown surprisingly little interest in the proceedings of the Trusteeship Council, preferring thus far to achieve their political aims in negotiation with the British administration. It is probable that the announcement resulted from the British desire to avoid a problem situation similar to Togoland's, where a large number of representatives of conflicting native political groups have appeared before the Trusteeship Council.

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LABOR

Strike of Federal Agricultural Workers (UNCLASSIFIED)

Several arrests and some injuries resulted from a riot which followed a strike of unskilled workers employed by the Federal Government at its agriculture experimental station in Ibadan. The workers reportedly objected to the small increase in their wages under the provisions of the recently-enacted Federal Wage legislation (D-147,P.5), claiming that they should receive compensation substantially equivalent to the five shillings earned by employees of the Western Regional Government.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

Although reasons for the strike and the workers' conflict with the police are not altogether clear, it is likely that the Action Group had a hand in provoking the incident. The possibility of labor difficulties is most acute in those areas of the Western Region, such as Ibadan, where operations are conducted jointly by the Federal and Western Governments.

Nigerian Labor in Fernando Po (UNCLASSIFIED)

During the Federal House's consideration of the estimates for the Department of Labor, several questions were asked concerning the status of Eastern Nigerian workers employed as laborers on the Spanish Island of Fernando Po. Speakers criticized the existing difficulties in arranging remittances and asked that Nigeria provide more adequate safeguards for the laborers' welfare by assigning additional labor officers, preferably African. Chief Festus OKOTIE-EBOH, Federal Minister of Labor and Welfare, replied that he intended to visit Fernando Po as soon as possible to survey the situation. He stated that the improvement in conditions was reflected in the fact that more than 70% of the Nigerian workers were currently renewing their contracts with the Spanish Government.

EDUCATION

Northern Primary Education (UNCLASSIFIED)

Malam ADIYU, Northern Minister of Education, remarked during the Northern Legislature's debate of the estimates for the Education Department that only approximately 15% of the 2½ million Northern children of school age are receiving formal educational instruction.

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ECONOMIC

Western Timber Inspection Board (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Western Region Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources has stated that the Government may soon appoint a Regional Timber Inspection Board to supervise the timber trade in the Region. If appointed, the Board will act to protect the reputation of the timber trade, which has suffered from widespread undesirable trading practices. Most of the timber exported from Nigeria comes from the Western Region. In 1954 Nigerian exports of logs were about 10.3 million cubic feet, worth £2.8 million, and sawn timber exports were 1.3 million cubic feet, valued at £.7 million.

Nigerian 1954 Trade. (UNCLASSIFIED)

The value of Nigerian exports in 1954 increased almost 20% over those in 1953; imports rose 6%. Total 1954 Nigerian trade figures show £113.9 million imports, £145.9 million domestic exports, and £3.3 million re-exports. These compare with the respective figures for 1953 of £108.2 million, £122 million, and £3.2 million. Nigeria ended 1954 with a visible trade balance of £31.9 million as compared to £17 million in 1953.

Cumulative Marketing Board Purchases (UNCLASSIFIED)

Marketing Board purchases have been announced for the following commodities through the dates indicated below:

Commodity	Date	Quantity in Long Tons
Soya Beans	to Feb. 24	8,986
Palm Produce	to March 10	
Kernels		62,400
Oil		
Special Grade A		14,951
Special Grade B		5,564
Technical		9,211
Plantation		2,230
Total Oil		31,956
Cocoa	to March 17	
Main Crop		68,010
Light Crop		6,909
Total		74,919

Sawmill in Southern Cameroons (UNCLASSIFIED)

Mr. S. T. MUNA, Executive Council member for Natural Resources, announced that the Colonial Development Corporation and the Forest Department were

Department were presently negotiating an agreement for establishing a timber extraction plant and sawmill for the controlled exploitation of forest reserves near Kumba.

British Industrial Mission (UNCLASSIFIED)

A two-man delegation from the Federation of British Industries is visiting Nigeria on a four week mission to examine the possibilities for British business in Nigeria. At a press convention in Lagos one of the representatives stated that the delegation was not concerned with any particular firm or industry but would examine all possible forms of Anglo-Nigerian economic development.

Lebanese Airline (UNCLASSIFIED)

It has been announced that direct air service between Beirut, Nigeria and the Gold Coast will be initiated in the near future by Air-Liban, which is apparently a Lebanese-owned airline. The announcement states that the company intends to use DC-4 aircraft.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

A similar announcement was made in 1949, but the service failed to materialize at that time reportedly because of smuggling charges against certain of the sponsors.

East Advocates Own Bulk Oil Plants (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Eastern House of Assembly has passed a government-sponsored motion urging that the Regional Marketing Board acquire its own bulk facilities for the storage and shipment of palm oil. Mr. E.O.EYO, Government Chief Whip, said that the Region would save money by ending the present arrangement whereby United Africa Company handles the oil after processing.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

As pointed out by an opposition member, it is doubtful whether the Board's assumption of bulking operations would result in lower costs and a concomitant increase in producers prices.

Nigerian Railway Corporation Law (UNCLASSIFIED)

An ordinance passed by the Federal House provides that control of Nigerian Railways will be vested in a Nigerian Railway Corporation. The Corporation will have operation and general direction of the

railway system subject

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railway system subject to the approval of the Federal Minister of Transport and Works, the Honorable Abubaka Tarefa BALEWA.

Miscellaneous Office Activities

During the period under review the Consulate General assisted the following American visitors:

Dr. Charles JOY, representative of CARE, visited Nigeria on a survey to determine whether CARE assistance could be utilized in the country.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

In common with representatives of other American official or unofficial "aid" organizations, Dr. Joy remarked upon the disinclination of the British officials to receive proffered assistance.

Bishop Charles HEEREY, Catholic Archbishop of Onitsha, called at the Consulate General in connection with his planned visit to the U.S. in June of 1955.

Edward D. McLaughlin
American Consul General

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